

# STATE OF THE RIVER 2001

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## RIVER PROFILE

From Bemidji, Minnesota to Saint Louis, Missouri, our cities and towns are like a string of pearls which link the river's rich cultural, social and natural history. In the past, riverside communities often turned their backs on the Mississippi River. But today, after decades of investment in improved wastewater treatment and with the help of the Clean Water Act of 1972, people are returning to a cleaner Mississippi where the economic needs of transportation, agriculture and manufacturing can be integrated with the social and environmental needs of river users, recreation-dependent industries and fish and wildlife populations. Our cities and towns have invested in riverfront redevelopment to stimulate economic activity, showcase the river's natural beauty, attract recreation and tourism, and create a gathering place for our communities.



The Mississippi River is a powerful force of renewal. Although the future of commercial navigation on the river has been the topic of much discussion at the national level, agriculture continues to form the backbone of the river valley's economy, and transportation of products on the river has grown as the Midwest has sought to move agricultural commodities to world markets. The same rich soil that nourished Native Americans and attracted European settlers today helps feed far more than the river valley's residents. Agriculture forms the backbone of the river valley's economy, and transportation of agricultural products on the river has grown as the Midwest has sought to move agricultural commodities to world markets. Overall, more than 90 million tons of cargo, including grain, petroleum products, and building material, are moved on the Upper Mississippi River each year. Manufacturing industries benefit from the Mississippi River as well, using river water in heating and cooling, to turn raw material into finished products, and for waste disposal. Cities and towns act as hubs for commerce, linking the river with producers and markets across the nation and the world. And the river continues to be an important source of electricity generation for homes and businesses.

The river's natural resources continue to support one of the most diverse and biologically productive wildlife populations in the world. The river hosts a wide array of different species, including the nation's most ancient lineage of fish, and provides temporary refuge for 40 percent of North America's migratory waterfowl. The river's floodplain includes dense forests of maples, cottonwoods, and willows, which support bald eagles, herons, egrets, and double-crested cormorants. Recreation on and along the Upper Mississippi River attracts 12 million annual visitors (four times more than Yellowstone National Park) who spend \$1.2 billion annually, supporting more than 18,000 recreation-related jobs. Commercial fishermen continue to harvest carp, buffalo, catfish and freshwater drum, sturgeon and paddlefish.

The heritage resources of the Mississippi River valley include traces of North America's earliest inhabitants. The river banks are dotted with remnants of the past, ranging from Native American effigy mounds to sites associated with Zebulon Pike's expedition to the headwaters of the Mississippi to the paddle wheelers that inspired Mark Twain. People of many ethnic and racial backgrounds have claimed homes along the river. Tourism has already brought significant economic benefits to riverside communities, which offer national and international visitors a window into different eras of American life. Attractions like Mark Twain's birthplace in Hannibal, historic steamboats and bridges, and river museums link visitors to the river's past.

## Community Project Priorities

The Upper Mississippi River AHRI communities have collaboratively identified six regional public-private initiatives.

- Communities need to be working with federal and state partners to develop a regional marketing strategy to highlight the river's heritage and natural resources.
- Communities are working with federal and state partners to redevelop riverfronts and riverside neighborhoods.
- Communities are working with public and private partners to establish a network of hiking and biking trails along large sections of the Mississippi River and its bluff lands.
- Riverside communities are working with federal and state partners to improve, establish and link interpretive centers throughout the river valley and create a regional consortium of heritage experts who will guide their efforts.
- Riverside communities are working with federal and state partners to protect and restore the river's natural resources.
- Communities are working with local universities to create a regional, computer-aided 'talent bank' of success stories and revitalization experts.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND RESOURCES LEVERAGED



Upper Mississippi River AHRI communities and supporting organizations worked with the Lower Mississippi River AHRI communities and others to achieve designation of the Mississippi River Trail as a National Millennium Trail in 1999. A multi-state Mississippi River Trail (MRT) Work Group is working on a continuous trail system, with the preferred route anticipated to be mapped out by the end of 2001. In addition, four of five Upper Mississippi River states have achieved National Scenic By-way designation for their segments of the 3,000-mile parkway known as the Great River Road.

Seven additional communities, and the 8 contiguous counties that make up the Mississippi Headwaters Board, have requested they be added to the Upper Mississippi River AHRI. Their request has been endorsed by the Council on Environmental Quality and forwarded to the White House for approval.

Many projects summarized in the original AHRI plan of action have progressed or achieved significant milestones. Here are some of the examples of the outstanding successes realized to date.

**Bemidji, Minnesota** - Bemidji MN received a Federal Highway Administration Environmental Excellence Award. Safer pedestrian crossings, brightly-colored city-entrance monuments, a "shoreline protection plan," an historic bridge converted to bike, pedestrian, and snowmobile use are some of the amenities Bemidji, Minn., residents will gain when a 1.5-mile section of highway is reconstructed along the lakeshore.

**Twin Cities Area** - Nearly all 19 communities from Ramsey to Hastings are actively working on riverfront revitalization projects, several of which have been the focus of proposals recently funded by Metropolitan Council through its Livable Communities Demonstration and Metro Environment Partnership Grant Programs and the Smart Growth Twin Cities Opportunity Sites Initiative. The city of South Saint Paul is working with the national non-profit American Rivers and Friends of the Mississippi River in the area to develop a national model of riverfront redevelopment that accommodates landowners' needs while increasing public access and protecting natural resources in an industrial area of the city.

Work groups linked to AHRI have formed to collaboratively explore shared areas of interest in the river corridor and are beginning to achieve results. They are focused on (1) Mississippi River Trails (which builds upon prior, significant progress made by the Regional Trails and Open Partnership in the Twin Cities to create a multi-state effort); (2) Conversions of Brownfield to green space; (3) Surface water use management on the river; and (4) Tourism. Results from these efforts include, but are not limited to, anticipated mapping of a preferred route for a system of trails along the Upper Mississippi River by the end of 2001; development of a legislative strategy to create a program to encourage cleaned-up sites to be converted to green space; partnering with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers in an Upper Mississippi River Reconnaissance Study that would result in the co-development of a Surface Water Use Management Plan for the Twin Cities stretch of the river; and the planned development in 2001 of river tourism packages, with assistance of the Minnesota Office of Tourism.

The Metropolitan Council regional wastewater treatment system continued near-perfect compliance with treatment plant clean water discharge permits. In addition, significant improvements underway

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## ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND RESOURCES LEVERAGED

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at the largest plant in the system, Metropolitan Wastewater Treatment Plant, are expected to reduce mercury emissions by 70% and phosphorus levels by 60% from 1998 to 2003.

In 1999, the Coon Rapids Dam Visitor Center opened, displaying many educational exhibits about the river, the cultural importance of the watershed, and a "talking" storm drain. WaterShed Partners, a collaboration of over 40 non-profit, private, and public organizations dedicated to educating the public on urban run-off pollution prevention, has (1) created a traveling WaterShed exhibit and kiosk with educational messages in English, Spanish and Hmong that has been shown to over 400,000 people in the metro area, (2) completed a metro-wide media campaign, "Think Clean Water," to educate the general public on everyday household practices that can prevent non-point source pollution and (3) recently began a citizen volunteer water monitoring program in streams and tributaries in the metro area. The Mighty Mississippi River Passport Program was successfully launched in 1999 and continues to provide low- to no-cost river experiences and stewardship opportunities for families and visitors.

On the central riverfront near downtown Minneapolis, over 2600 housing units have been built or are under construction, many historic buildings have been preserved, and key park and trail projects completed. An illustrative project is the West Side Milling District in the core of the St. Anthony Falls Historic District, where the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has undertaken an archaeological dig to expose the foundations of the water power system and flour mills that made Minneapolis the "Mill City". The end result will be Mill Ruins Park, an urban archaeological interpretive park adjacent to a recently completed link in the Great River Road, which recently achieved National Scenic By-way designation. The Minnesota Historical Society is about to start construction of the Mill City Museum, a major interpretive center which has been designated a "Save America's Treasures" project and will be built within the ruin walls. Vacant historic buildings are being rehabilitated for loft housing and compatible new construction housing is also planned. The planned relocation of the internationally renowned Guthrie Theatre to a new downtown riverfront location was announced in 2000.

In St. Paul, a new Science Museum of Minnesota with 11 acres of exhibit space opened on the downtown riverfront in late 1999. The museum includes a Mississippi River Gallery created in partnership with National Park Service/MNRRRA. Directly across the river from the museum, a grand opening celebration in September 2000 drew 50,000 visitors to a newly rehabilitated Harriet Island Park, which includes new facilities, landscaping and a series of steps that lead directly to the river. Plans are also underway to convert a 26-acre former industrial site to a mixed-use development known as Upper Landing Urban Village, which would create 650 rental and for-sale housing units, 23,000 square feet of commercial space and a plaza in the downtown river corridor.

Great River Greening, a major reforestation program in Saint Paul initiated by the Saint Paul Foundation, has planted 26,000 trees and shrubs and nearly 12,000 wildflowers and restored nearly 47 acres of prairie along the river with the help of citizen volunteers and business partners. Greening has also received state funding to expand its reforestation program further south of downtown over the next several years. In the Twin Cities, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Metro Greenways Program was provided funds from the Minnesota Legislature in 1999 and 2000 and has awarded grants for both planning and acquisition activities in or near the river corridor.

**Dubuque, Iowa** - Work is well underway to create a dramatic new national river interpretation and education center in the tri-state area at Dubuque, IA. This initiative was awarded a \$40 million grant from the state's Vision Iowa program. This project is a joint venture of the City of Dubuque, the Dubuque County Historical Society's Mississippi River Museum and the Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce. Once complete, the \$188 million project will feature a Mississippi River Discovery Center, the Mississippi River national Education and Conference Center, the Riverwalk and Amenities, and the Riverfront hotel and Indoor Waterpark

**Fulton, Illinois** - The City of Fulton, IL is celebrating its Dutch heritage by the construction of an authentic Dutch windmill. The first part of the work on the Beltmolen-type windmill was finished in May of 2000. The windmill is operational in the sense that the head can be turned to position the sails into the direction of the wind and the sails are turning on the wind. This windmill is scheduled to be completely operational by May 2001.

**Quad Cities Area** - Activities in the Quad Cities area, led by River Action, Inc. have resulted in the completion of several significant initiatives. Their Riverway 2000 program was very successful this past year. This program paid for the development and installation of a kiosk in the new Centennial Park in Davenport, IA. They were instrumental in the funding for an environmental art project in Rapids City, IL. River Action was involved in a partnership venture for the Duck Creek demonstration project in Davenport and Bettendorf, IA and Americorps work at Nahant Marsh. They also worked with the smaller communities of Hampton, Port Byron and Cordova, IL and Princeton and Buffalo, IA to create a continuous recreation trail on both sides of the river. River Action volunteers spoke to about 30 different groups (1200 students) about the hazards of non-point pollution and their drain sticker campaign. River Action will cost share wetland restoration of Milan Bottoms as a Section 1135 project with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

**Hannibal, Missouri** - Hannibal, MO, has prepared a new vision for its waterfront. The city is building on its improvements at Glascock's Landing, adding new bike paths and moving forward with continuing reclamation, restoration, and redevelopment of their historic riverfront.

**St Louis Area** - The St. Louis 2004 Action Plan is serving as a catalyst for revitalization. St. Louis 2004 brings people, organizations and resources together to address regional issues. In 1996 and 1997, St. Louis 2004 led the region in an unprecedented

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## ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND RESOURCES LEVERAGED

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community outreach effort. First, thousands of citizens shared their vision at "Think 2004" events and then, Action Teams created "Ideas for Change". After the strategies were created, the region reviewed and prioritized recommendation in Community Forums. In 1998, the St. Louis Action Plan Initiatives were announced and the region was on its way.

One of those initiatives, the Sustainable Neighborhoods Initiative is an unprecedented partnership of residents, community groups, financial institutions and state and local government to revitalize nine St. Louis-area neighborhood clusters. It combines physical development and infrastructure improvements with human service support and community-based economic development. Already 19 financial institutions have committed \$751 million in up-front investments and loans in the neighborhood for new and rehabilitated housing, new business development and job creation. The Deaconess Foundation has pledged \$1 million a year for seven years to fund projects to meet families' health-related needs.

St. Louis 2004 is also a partner in Downtown Now!, a public/private partnership to implement the Downtown Development Action Plan. The St. Louis City Planning Commission adopted The Downtown Development Action Plan in December 1999, making it Downtown St. Louis' official redevelopment plan.

The Washington Avenue Loft District, a focus area of the Downtown Now! Plan has already received 17.3 million in federal funding for streetscape improvements. Downtown Now is also developing detailed streetscape designs for a 65-block core Downtown area to connect commercial and residential developments as well as public venues and attractions and create a more walkable Downtown. Other Downtown developments include the \$80 million Westin Hotel at Cupples Station; the \$2.70 million Convention Center Hotel; and the newly restore 370-deluxe room Drury Plaza Hotel.

On November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2000, Proposition C, the Clean Water Safe Parks and Community Trails Initiative, passed overwhelmingly in five counties on both sides of the river – a win for regional cooperation! Proposition C's passage means that each year over \$20 million in new money for recreation and conservation projects will flow into the City of St. Louis, St. Louis County and St. Charles County in Missouri and St. Clair County and Madison County in Illinois.

The Greater St. Louis Land Development Fund provides long-term capital at below-market interest rates for large-scale land assembly/redevelopment projects in distressed areas enabling acquisition and clean-up of parcels of land. The Fund loans capital to public/private partnerships for assembling and improving parcels of vacant and/or underutilized land and makes them available to responsible users. The City of St. Louis and St. Louis County identified the North Riverfront Industrial Corridor and Wellston Technology Park respectively as pilot redevelopment area for the Fund. The State of Missouri's Department of Economic Development granted \$3 million in tax credits leveraged \$6 million in capital from Firststar and Bank America.

The City of St. Louis, MO is also involved in downtown development plans for the Upper Mississippi riverfront. These plans include creating hiking and biking trails, improving access to the riverfront, improving green space. This work also includes the development of a regional Great River Resource Center that will draw national attention to the Upper Mississippi River Region and present the history of river transportation. This past year the City of St. Louis, MO teamed up with the City of East St. Louis, IL for a successful Brownfield Showcase Community grant application, which is now underway.

Just north of the majestic Gateway Arch, and next to the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in St. Louis, MO stands the monument from another era, the James Buchanan Eads bridge with its massive three span steel arches with two stone piers and two masonry approaches. Eads Bridge was built shortly after the Civil War (1874) and was the engineering and construction feat of its day, a double-deck bridge for rail, highway, and pedestrian traffic. As the first major crossing of the Mississippi River, the Eads Bridge became a critical link in the transcontinental railroad, and it accelerated St. Louis development as the "Gateway to the West". Today, efforts are underway to refurbish this historic bridge with historically accurate safety railings and lighting. The plans include replicas of the original Eads railings, restoration of the brickwork and acorn-style light fixtures hanging from L-shaped poles. Improvements also include opening half of the four-lane bridge to bicycle and pedestrian traffic on weekends. This area could later be converted to a full-time pedestrian and bike promenade. This renovation work goes far beyond what was originally proposed for resurfacing Eads Bridge and opening up to vehicle traffic. All of these changes have been made possible by a \$1 million dollar pledge coming from a group of 68 individuals, corporations and foundations. Mayor Clarence Harmon and Trailnet, a St. Louis-based nonprofit group, recently made this announcement and stated that these funds will be used to leverage additional federal and state funding necessary to complete all of this work.

In 2004, the St. Louis Region will have much to celebrate. The 2004 initiatives envision a world-class celebration that will showcase the region as an exciting place to live, work and visit. Efforts are underway to finalize and build support for a series of memorable and meaningful events that will build regional pride and enhance sense of community. These events will compliment the powerhouse events already scheduled for 2004, including the U.S. Senior Open golf Championship, NCAA Men's Midwest Regional Championship and the National Lewis and Clark Expedition Festival.

## Future Challenges

The Upper Mississippi River AHR communities have demonstrated the potential to continue building upon their successes and adding new partnerships to their list of accomplishments. Additional river communities along the river have expressed their interest in joining this initiative and need to be formally recognized and added to the list of participants. Other actions that need to be taken over the next two years include;

- Continued assistance in accessing federal administrators and federal agency programs that support the AHRI objectives.
- Development of new grant programs that recognize and support the priorities being established and pursued by riverfront communities.
- Development of new legislation in support of riverfront community initiatives.
- New and innovative partnerships with non-traditional partners.
- Renewed support from federal and state legislators.
- Increased tax incentive programs to stimulate more interest in saving riverfront properties
- Full funding for existing programs that support the objectives of AHRI.
- Develop a community partner organization that effectively represents all of the communities participating in the AHRI on the Upper Mississippi River.



### Other Regional Initiatives

- The annual Fillmore Mississippi Heritage Conference that serves to bring river communities together with Federal, states, and private programs that help revitalize the Mississippi River needs for the environment, the economy and the community
- The Grand Excursion 2004, a marketing and promotional event that will include a flotilla to commemorate the 1854 excursion by Millard Fillmore that put the Upper Mississippi River into the mainstream of America, on the occasion of the Excursion's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary



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## UPPER MISSISSIPPI AMERICAN HERITAGE RIVER PARTNERSHIP

The Upper Mississippi River , American Heritage Rivers Initiative involves 58 river communities that are spread out over 1200 river miles from Bemidji, MN to St. Louis, MO. Although the geographic distribution of these communities presents a challenge for any community partner organizational structure, these communities are making significant progress in working together. Communications between communities has been enhanced through the services of the missriver-l listserv, supported by Bridging-the-River at the University of Minnesota. This list provides a network for the exchange of information such as job announcements, availability of funding, and technical assistance, advice about successful projects and request for assistance.

Two multi-stakeholder organizations are also functioning to bring river communities together and help them achieve their goals. River Action, Inc., in the Quad Cities area, represents 12 of the participating river communities and serves as an effective focal point for providing funding and technical resources to this metropolitan area. Further up river, in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area, the Twin Cities Steering Committee supports implementation of the Upper Mississippi American Heritage Rivers Initiative's (AHRI) plan of action, coordinating Twin Cities' efforts and activities with those of federally-designated AHRI communities from the headwaters to Saint Louis. The committee represents 19 local governments and over 40 river organizations and agencies voluntarily participating in AHRI in the 72-mile stretch of the river in the Twin Cities. It seeks to communicate and coordinate state, regional, and local projects and river initiatives; identify areas of shared interest among partners and stakeholders; and initiate partnerships and collaborations to take advantage of new opportunities or remove barriers to successful implementation of the shared plan of action.